

W5YI

America's Oldest Ham Radio Newsletter REPORT

Up to the minute news from the world of amateur radio, personal computing and emerging electronics. While no guarantee is made, information is from sources we believe to be reliable.

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FCC Proposes \$50 Fee for Vanity Call Signs!

The history of "Vanity" call signs in the amateur service is long ...and interesting! It actually goes back to June 1990 when Jim Wills, N5HCT -- a retired Extra Class amateur from Tyler, Texas wanted to reclaim his long expired WA5EHQ call sign. That's when Jim filed a *Petition for Rule Making* in response to an April 19, 1990, FCC *Public Notice* concerning the assignment of Amateur Radio station call signs.

Wills suggested that amateurs be allowed to specify three call sign choices in order of preference and attach a \$30.00 fee to the FCC requesting a call sign change. "The Federal Budget and the amateur community all gain from this proposal", he said. That petition was denied because of the statutory exemption of amateur service applications from fees.

In 1991, Jim contacted his Congressman, Ralph M. Hall (Democrat-TX) who shared the idea with the staff of the House Telecommunications Subcommittee who were already working on a way to make the FCC at least partially self-supporting. The goal was for the FCC to collect enough user fees to help pay for itself. Hall told Jim Wills that Congress might be able to make the necessary legislative changes to put a vanity call sign fee into effect.

On June 12, 1992, a letter, jointly signed by Representative Edward J. Markey (Democrat-MA) and Representative Ralph M. Hall was sent to then FCC Chairman Alfred Sikes. It said "We are writing to you on behalf of several amateur radio operators who are interested in the establishment of an FCC

system for allotting distinctive call signs. Such call signs would be available at a fee to radio operators, in order to recover the total cost associated with the program." The addition of Markey's signature to the letter added renewed importance! Markey and the House Commerce Committee controls the FCC budget.

On January 13, 1993, Congressman Hall again wrote Jim Wills about a self-funding program of granting special call signs to ham radio enthusiasts that would not place additional demands on FCC resources as long as the FCC set fees at an appropriate level. He also noted that the FCC was already reprogramming their Amateur data processing system and that this would be a good time to implement a specialized call sign program.

A major problem was that the FCC still didn't have permission to collect fees associated with ham radio. Ralph Hall discussed the issue with the staff of Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Ed Markey and gained his support for a legislative proposal which would allow the FCC to collect fees for specialized call signs in the Amateur Service.

Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993.

That's the official name of the Clinton Deficit Reduction Plan. In the budget bill was a provision for collecting regulatory fees from various FCC licensees. "Vanity" call signs in the Amateur Service at an initial proposed cost of \$7.00 a year over ten years (\$70.00) were included as part of the Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993. And neither the FCC or ARRL knew it was coming! The stunning

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development caught everyone flat-footed. It seemed that Jim Wills had worked directly with Congress who bypassed the FCC's Private Radio Bureau.

The wording that applied to the Amateur Service, inserted in the *Schedule of Regulatory Fees* at the last minute, was only 4 words long. It read: "Amateur vanity call-signs \$7." The FCC was authorized "...to assess and collect the payment in advance for a number of years not to exceed the term of the license held by the payor."

Actually, Clinton's Deficit Reduction Plan (and vanity call signs) almost didn't get approved at all! It passed the House by only 2 votes (218 to 216) and Vice President Al Gore had to break a 50-50 tie in the Senate. Clinton signed the measure into law on August 10, 1993.

Ironically, even though Congressman Hall was primarily responsible for getting the Amateur call sign amendment tied to that bill, he voted against it! He was opposed to the Clinton budget package and his plan was to get "Vanity" call signs inserted in the FCC Authorization bill which would be coming up later in the year!

The new FCC computer system was programmed to provide personalized Amateur call signs in 1994. The special call sign program still had to go through rule making before it could be implemented. The FCC issued a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* on December 13, 1993 and approved the final "Vanity" call sign rules almost exactly a year later (on December 23, 1994.)

While the ARRL played no part in getting the vanity call sign program through Congress and enacted into law, they were very active in developing the guidelines under which amateurs would be able to obtain a call sign of their choice. And in the end, the FCC basically followed their suggestions. But there were exceptions.

For example, the ARRL wanted a one-time \$150.00 application fee rather than a regulatory fee with the call sign only being chosen from the amateur's own region. A system of opening gates and a FCC Form 610-V vanity call sign application developed.

Section 9 Regulatory fees

There are actually two kinds of licensee fees authorized by the *Communications Act* that the FCC assesses and collects. "Application fees" authorized by Section 8 of the Act were already on the books. These fees are to reimburse the government for the administrative costs involved in issuing licenses and permits.

Section 9 (Regulatory) fees are to reimburse the government for the FCC's regulatory activities including enforcement, rule-making, user-information and international activities. Both application and regulatory fees can be adjusted upwards in \$5.00 increments based on increases in the Consumer Price Index (inflation) and FCC costs.

Non-profit (including amateur radio), public safety/emergency and local, state and federal government stations are all statutorily exempt from paying either applica-

tion or regulatory fees. The Act does, however, specifically allow a regulatory fee for amateur vanity call signs.

The ultimate objective of the Section 8 and 9 fee systems is for the FCC to collect their budgetary costs from the same public who obtains the benefit of their services. In fiscal year 1995, the FCC proposed adjustments to the regulatory fee schedule that would recover \$116.4 million in FCC costs. The amount that must be recovered is set by Congress.

Congress and the *Communications Act* initially authorized a vanity call sign cost of \$7 annually over a ten year term (\$70). On June 14, 1995 -- and with the 1995 fiscal year nearly over -- the FCC's Office of Managing Director reduced that cost to \$3.00 - or \$30.00 for the 1995 fiscal year. Coincidentally (or was it), this is the same cost that Jim Wills had suggested in his 1990 petition.

The Managing Director's office came up with the \$3 annual figure by initially estimating that 2,000 amateur vanity call signs would be issued at a total cost of \$60,000. This was later drastically changed by the Wireless Telecommunication Bureau to a revenue requirement of \$840,000 for an estimated 28,000 vanity call sign applications that they felt would be handled annually - about 2,300 a month. It still worked out to \$3.00 per vanity call sign, however. But no amateur vanity call signs were issued in FY-1995.

Congress required the FCC to recover \$126.4 million in FY-1996 but it was well into FY-1996 (which began Oct. 1, 1995) before the vanity call sign program really got going. The first Vanity call signs were not issued until June 1996 and even then it was only for previously held call signs. The FCC did not open the program to Amateur Extra Class amateurs until September 23, 1996. It soon became apparent that the costs to administer the Vanity call sign program were higher than first thought.

Fiscal year 1997.

For fiscal year 1997 (which started Oct. 1, 1996) Congress is requiring that the FCC collect \$152.5 million in regulatory fees, a 21% increase.

On March 3, 1997, the FCC released a proposed fee schedule in order to collect the increased amount required by Congress. Additionally, the FCC proposed to include Regulatory fees upon licensees not previously subject to payment of a fee. For example: PCS (Personal Communications Services, the new low-power commercial telephone service) is included for the first time. The NPRM is on the super fast track. Only a 15 day comment deadline is being allowed and a *Final Report and Order* is expected by July 1.

In developing the proposed FY-1997 fee schedule, the FCC took into consideration the estimated number of payment units for FY-1997 and then pro-rated a shortfall among all the existing fee categories. They also evaluated various proposals made by Commission staff

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concerning other adjustments to the Fee Schedule. Payment units were obtained through a variety of means, including licensee data bases, actual prior year payment records, and various projections.

The FCC limited the fee increases to a 25 percent increase over the FY 1996 fees. The 25 percent increase is over and above the revenue which would be required after adjusting for the projected FY 1997 payment units. Thus, FY-1997 fees may increase more than 25 percent over FY 1996 fees depending upon the number of payment units. And in the case of amateur vanity call signs, it does.

The FCC has again re-evaluated how many vanity call signs it believes it will issue. It now estimates that some 10,000 applicants will apply for vanity call signs in FY-1997. (Somewhat less than the 28,000 first anticipated!) Based on the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) projections of new vanity call sign requests, a regulatory fee of \$5.00 annually - or \$50 for a ten year term is being recommended. And it seems assured that is what you will shortly be paying! Here is the wording from the NPRM covering FY-1997 Regulatory fees:

"Amateur Vanity Call Signs: This fee covers voluntary requests for specific call signs in the Amateur Radio Service authorized under Part 97 of the Commission's Rules. For FY 1997, we are proposing that applicants for Amateur Vanity Call-Signs will pay a \$5 annual regulatory fee per call sign, payable for an entire ten-year license term at the time of application for a vanity call sign. The total regulatory fee due would be \$50 per license for the ten-year license term. Section 9(h) exempts "amateur radio operator licenses under Part 97 of the Commission's rules (47 CFR Part 97)" from the requirement. However, Section 9(g)'s fee schedule explicitly includes 'Amateur vanity call signs' as a category subject to the payment of a regulatory fee."

General Mobile Radio Service licensees are also having their regulatory fee increased to \$5.00 per year - based on a five year license. GMRS is the old 462/467 MHZ Class A UHF-CB Service. No unlicensed service ...including Part 15 devices, 11-meter Citizens Banders, private aviation and ship radio stations ...or the new Family Radio Service is being assessed a regulatory fee. The costs of regulating these entities is borne by those licensees subject to a fee requirement.

By the way, Jim Wills N5HCT who got the vanity call sign program off and running, never did get his old WA5EHQ call sign. He requested and received W5JIM!

HAM RADIO VOLUNTEER PROTECTION PROPOSED

On March 11, 1997, Rep. Anna Eshoo of California reintroduced HR-1013 into Congress. The Amateur Radio Volunteer Services Act of 1997 places volunteers in the Volunteer Examination Program and the Amateur Auxiliary under the protections of the Federal Tort Claims Act. The American Radio Relay League was very

instrumental in getting the bill reintroduced.

Under the FTCA, the government would step in to provide legal defense for any of these volunteers who are sued for actions taken while performing duties on behalf of the Federal Government. The bill, introduced with 21 co-sponsors, is largely identical to the bill introduced last year by Representative Baker. (Thanks, N1MZA)

Remarks from the Congressional Record

INTRODUCTION OF THE AMATEUR RADIO VOLUNTEER SERVICES ACT OF 1997

[Page: E436] --- HON ANNA G ESHOO in the House of Representatives -- TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 1997

Ms ESHOO. Mr Speaker, I rise today to announce the introduction of the Amateur Radio Volunteer Services Act of 1997. Similar to a unanimously accepted amendment I offered last year to the FCC reauthorization bill in the Commerce Committee, this bill would help protect the personal liability of volunteer amateur radio operators while performing duties on behalf of the Federal Government.

Amateur radio operators are self-regulated, with volunteer operators monitoring the airwaves for violations and administering licensing exams. This volunteer corps saves countless hours of staff time and resources for the Federal Communications Commission [FCC]; however, because they are not Federal employees, they put their personal assets at risk in the event of actions taken against them as a result of their volunteer service to the Government. It is simply unfair that these volunteers who are saving the Government time and resources should have to risk their personal assets in carrying out their service.

The Amateur Radio Volunteer Services Act would classify those individuals donating their time and expertise to maintaining the quality of the amateur radio airwaves as Federal employees only for the purpose of actions taken against them in the performance of their duties as self-regulators.

This action will ensure the continued viability of the amateur radio community and continue to save the FCC and the Federal Government time and money that would otherwise need to be expended. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I urge my colleagues to support this worthy legislation.

CONGRESSMAN PLEDGES AMATEUR SUPPORT

In January, the Garden State Amateur Radio Association (New Jersey) hosted a club meeting where they were addressed by Congressman Frank J Pallone Jr. He sent the club the following letter. (Thanks N2FF)

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3006

February 19, 1997

Mr Roy Edwards, KB2LUO
1512 Seventh Avenue
Neptune, NJ 07753

Dear Mr. Edwards:

It was good to see you at the meeting January 15. I have

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summarized for your members some of the highlights of the meeting as well as my position on the principle issues raised. I will be sending them a letter tomorrow and wanted to make sure you received an advance copy.

First and foremost, it was clear from the comments from those who attended, we must work harder to preserve and protect amateur radio frequencies. Amateur radio operators provide invaluable communication services in times of emergency. It is certainly in the interest of the American people to preserve these frequencies.

As a member of the House Commerce Committee, which as jurisdiction over telecommunications issues, I intend to work toward this goal and to educate my colleagues that spectrum auctions are not without negative, long-term consequences.

Frequency allocations should be viewed as natural resources, like our national parks, to be preserved and protected.

Finally, I will support enactment of the Amateur Radio Volunteer Services Act in the 105th Congress. This legislation offers liability protection to FCC-authorized ham radio volunteers-the same protection offered to federal employees under the Federal Tort Claims Act. This legislation would protect volunteers from frivolous suits when they are monitoring the airwaves, conducting license tests and performing other services which save the U.S. taxpayers money.

I hope you have found this summary of interest and that we can continue to keep in touch on these and other related issues. With best regards,

Sincerely,

/s/ FRANK PALLONE, JR.

Member of Congress, 6th District, NJ

STS-83 SHUTTLE HAM ASTRONAUTS TO SPEAK WITH STUDENTS VIA AMATEUR RADIO

The next space shuttle mission will once again include SAREX. The Shuttle Amateur Radio EXperiment, which has been flying aboard the space shuttles since 1983, permits ham operators and schools to speak directly to ham astronauts aboard the shuttle. STS-83 liftoff from Cape Canaveral is scheduled for April 3rd at 2:00 pm EST (19:01 GMT). The launch will place the shuttle into Earth orbit at an altitude of 160 statute miles.

Some amateurs will be assisting student groups who have prepared questions to ask the astronauts during specially scheduled contact times. NASA's intent in making astronauts available for SAREX operations is to involve the largest possible numbers of people, particularly students, in technology and the US space program.

Three of the seven STS-83 crew are licensed Amateur Radio operators: Commander James Halsell is KC5RNI, Payload Commander Janice Voss KC5BTV, and Mission Specialist Donald Thomas KC5FVF.

The primary payload is the first Microgravity Science Laboratory (MSL-1), a key component of the bridge between present Spacelab and future Space Station operations.

Schools are selected from around the world to make contact with the shuttle. A few students from each school ask questions which are answered by the ham astronauts over amateur radio frequencies.

THE FOLLOWING SCHOOLS WERE SELECTED:

Artesia Public Schools,	Artesia, NM
Lexington Traditional Magnet School,	Lexington, KY
Troy Intermediate School,	Troy, TX
Crittenden Middle School,	Mountain View, CA
Edgewater High School,	Orlando, FL
S.J. Davis Middle School,	San Antonio, TX
Mountain View Elementary School,	Dewey, AZ
PS 9 (Public School 9),	New York, NY
Lawrence Intermediate School,	Lawrenceville, NJ
Sonny Carter Elementary School,	Macon, GA
County College of Morris,	Randolph, NJ
Ione Junior High School,	Jackson, CA
Robert J. Burch Elementary School,	Tyrone, GA
Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute,	Jamestown, TN
Beau Chene High School,	Arnaudville, LA
Center Street School,	El Segundo, CA
Lester Middle School,	Okinawa, Japan
Tsinghua University, Beijing,	People's Republic of China

During most SAREX missions, many of the crew members will also make random contacts with earth-bound hams. They make these contacts during their breaks, before and after meal time, and during their pre-sleep time. SAREX configuration C will be flown on STS-83 allowing the shuttle ham astronauts to operate in either the voice or data mode in communications with amateur stations within LOS of the Orbiter.

FREQUENCIES (FM):

Voice Downlink: (Worldwide) 145.55 MHz
Voice Uplink: 144.91, 144.93, 144.95, 144.97 & 144.99 MHz
Voice Uplink: (Europe only) 144.70, 144.75 & 144.80 MHz
Packet Downlink: 145.55 MHz
Packet Uplink: 144.49 MHz

CALL SIGNS:

Voice call signs: KC5RNI, KC5BTK & KC5FVF
Packet call sign: W5RRR-1

The crew uses separate receive and transmit frequencies. Do NOT transmit on the shuttle's DOWNLINK frequency. The DOWNLINK is your receiving frequency. The UPLINK is your transmitting frequency. The crew will not favor any particular uplink frequency.

W1AW transmits news bulletins (9:45 pm, 12:45 am EST) on HF bands at 1.855, 3.99, 7.29, 14.29, 18.16, 21.39, 28.59 MHz. The Goddard Amateur Radio Club (Greenbelt, MD) re-transmits live, shuttle air-to-ground audio over the amateur frequencies from their club station, WA3NAN at 3.86, 7.185, 14.295, 21.395, and 28.65 MHz.

Send reports and QSLs to ARRL EAD, STS-83 QSL, 225 Main Street, Newington, CT 06111-1494, USA. Include the following information in your QSL or report: STS-83, date, time in UTC, frequency and mode (FM, voice or packet). In addition, you must also include a SASE using a large, business-sized envelope if you wish to receive a card. SAREX is sponsored by the ARRL, AMSAT, NASA ...and supported by the FCC.

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CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY

- **Texas Instruments has a \$1,500 consumer night-vision system** that permits automobile drivers to see objects that headlights often can not. "Nightsight" uses a technology originally developed for the military and law enforcement whereby a target is illuminated by heat emitted by the object. The camera will be available on upscale automobiles within 3 years.
- **Panasonic and Hitachi both have introduced 24X CD ROM drives** at the Hannover Fair in Germany. They will hit the U.S. market within 30 days at a price around \$250. The 3,600 kbs data transfer rivals that of hard drives.
- **Microsoft has proposed a new alternative standard to HTML, the language of the Internet.** Extensible Markup Language (XML) adds more features not possible with Hypertext Markup Language. Many big companies (such as Adobe, Sun Microsystems, Novell and Hewlett-Packard) have signed on.
- **Telemedicine Health Services** -- The Medical College of Georgia in Augusta is participating in a project called Electronic House Call. Funded by the U.S. Army Medical Center, at-home and nursing home patients are "seen" daily by doctors and nurses through a remote-controlled video camera and a PC lashed to a cable-TV connection.

COMPUTER INFO

- **Apple Computer has decided that it needs to slim down by cutting people and products to make a profit.** It will now focus on catering to the graphics and publishing community where it has been highly successful. Two thirds of all professional graphics companies use the Macintosh platform.

In a last ditch effort, the company will terminate about one-third of its workforce. In all, 4,100 people will lose their jobs. Apple expects another \$600 million in red ink this quarter. The uncertainty surrounding the company is keeping consumers from purchasing Mac's ...and Apple stock is near a ten year low. Apple will also discontinue its Performa line of Macintosh computers.

In the summer of 1998 (if it lasts that long), Apple expects to release its

new version of the Macintosh Operating System. Code named "Rhapsody", the system is a hybrid of the MacOS and an operating system it acquired when it purchased Next Software, Inc., owned by former Apple founder, Steve Jobs.

Mac Clones, on the other hand, seem to be doing well! Motorola has shipped 50,000 of its high-end StarMax series in the four months since its roll-out last November! And the Umax Computer and Power Computing clones have done even better. This had led Apple to consider raising its royalty fee.

Wal-Mart, the nation's largest retailer, has quickly and quietly opened a discount computer shop on the Web at <http://www.wal-mart.com> They are offering some 20,000 branded computer products at an ultra-low price which has competitors angry! It seems that Wal-Mart has chosen to undercut the contractual "MAP" guidelines on many of the products.

MAP is the "minimum advertised pricing" at which a dealer agrees to promote a product. Wal-Mart says the WWW is not an advertisement and MAP doesn't really apply to Internet telemarketing. But where it becomes necessary to adhere to the MAP in order to get a specific product, Wal-Mart offers other incentives, such as free shipping. (For example: A Compaq Desk Pro 2000 with a Pentium 100 MHZ chip, 630 MB hard drive, 8 MB memory, keyboard, mouse and Win-95 was priced at \$977.)

The rock bottom pricing plan is aimed at forcing on-line sales. Any of the basic assortment products carried in Wal-Mart retail stores will cost more. Due to their huge (multi-billion dollar) buying power, they were able to quickly get authorization to carry just about every name brand imaginable. And every retail price is posted -- something that most competitors do not do. It is the place to buy ...that is, if you know what you want! At the very least, you should use the site to do your price shopping. Shipping will be handled by an assortment of fulfillment houses -- primarily Ingram Micro.

Wal-Mart says they will eventually be adding even more computer items. But it doesn't stop there. They plan to have 50,000 stock keeping items each of music CDS, books and videos! Watch this site!

Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) has a new "K6 MMX" multimedia processor chip that is (supposedly) far less costly and more effective than Intel's Pen-

tium MMX which was introduced in January. An AMD powered PC would cost hundreds of dollars less than its Intel-driven counterpart.

Intel responded with a lawsuit charging that AMD can not call their K6 chip "MMX" since the label is an Intel trademark. Cyrix is also readying their "M2" version of MMX chip. Both AMD and Cyrix contend that MMX (MultiMedia eX-tension) is a generic engineering term.

Asian diplomatic shell game: the left hand does not want to know what the right is doing! Taiwan is looking to other countries to take up the slack once Hong Kong reverts back to Chinese rule on July 1. Taiwanese electronic manufacturing companies "indirectly" export more than \$2 billion in PC and computer parts to mainland China which are handled by Hong Kong "intermediaries" who do the paperwork. No direct trade exists between the two nations since mainland China considers Taiwan to be a renegade province.

Instead, China "theoretically" imports from Hong Kong companies. Hong Kong businessmen are now relocating to Singapore, Bermuda, the Bahamas and various Caribbean Islands and are quietly setting up "shell companies" to handle Taiwanese trade into China which has agreed to allow direct shipping between Taiwan and Chinese ports to continue. So on paper, China does not trade with Taiwan, but both nations really know better. Acer is the largest PC maker in Taiwan. They make the hot-selling Legend PC for Beijing-based Legend Holdings, Ltd.

And be on the lookout here in the U.S. for the new AcerBasic II PC which should be a barn-burner! It comes with a 120 MHZ Pentium micro-processor, 8 MB of memory, 256K cache memory, 1.2 GB of storage, 16-bit sound card, 8X CD-ROM and a 14" color monitor ...all for under \$1,000. We heard it is available now.

The fight still rages on which 56 Kbps modem will win the market-place. One technology, called "X2," is championed by U.S. Robotics, Inc. and IBM. Motorola, Rockwell, Compaq and Lucent Technologies are pushing an incompatible "K56Plus" version. Both are just now hitting dealer shelves. Both versions require support from your Internet Service Provider; otherwise your modem works at only half the speed! At this point, America Online, CompuServe, MCI, NetCom and Prodigy are going with

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the X2 format. Again, don't buy a 56 Kb modem unless you check with your ISP. So far both U.S. Robotics and Rockwell have refused to make their two formats work together.

INTERNET NEWS

■ **The irreverent Howard Stern has opened a Website on the Internet at:** <http://www.private-parts.com> Stern is, of course, the host of No. 1-rated talk show in America with 18 million listeners. He is also the author of the outrageous autobiography, "Private Parts" ...and has a new movie out by the same name.

The purpose of the site (which is copyrighted by Paramount Pictures) is to promote the movie. People get to vote on whether *Howard Rules* or *Howard Sucks*. And so far, 90% are on the *Howard Rules* side. There are also some x-rated games on the site including an interesting slot machine which you can play. Instead of cherries, oranges, lemons, plums and bars on the spinning wheels -- they are, well, ...Private Parts.

■ **Microsoft has new software that makes it easier for developers to write applications that can be used by people with disabilities.** "Active Accessibility™" allows programmers to build utilities (called "Accessibility Aids") into their programs that can "read" the contents of a computer screen to the blind using a speech synthesizer. It also can execute spoken commands, take dictation, interpret multimedia sounds with closed captioning and provide input through on-screen keyboards and Morse code. Available from Microsoft at no charge. Check out -- <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/> (Does this program have any application for Morse Code training? Let me know!)

■ **MCI has licensed a fast, interactive Internet game-playing technology called "Wireplay" from British Telecommunications (BT).** It plans to offer a national game service in the U.S. PC users can play popular games as long as both are connected to Wireplay. BT now owns 20% of MCI and is buying the rest.

■ **The Spring "Internet World" Convention was the biggest thing to hit Los Angeles in some time!** In mid-March about 100,000 visitors showed up at the LA Convention Center in a festive mood for the three-day show. The popularity of the show which was closed to the

general public mirrored the Internet! IBM was in charge of installing Internet access to some 4,000 computers. More than 600 exhibitors showed their goods and services! Apple even had a Cyber Cafe for people to sip coffee and browse the Internet. Partying at night was the rule! A Nielsen study released at the convention said that 23% of the population of the United States and Canada over 16 years old are on the Internet.

Rob Glaser, founder of Progressive Networks (RealAudio) said in his keynote speech that the Net will become the next mass medium ...especially when full motion video is available.

In another speech, analyst John DeVoltes said that some 6 million phone lines were added in 1995 because of the Internet. This provided an additional \$1.4 billion in revenue to the local Bell Operating Systems. He said that phone companies would not be successful in their attempt to charge for online usage. He also predicted that 1997 would be the last year that consumers would see flat-rate monthly Internet access pricing because expenses are rising and Internet Service Providers need a way to increase revenue.

■ **We heard that Netscape is now considering giving away its new "Communicator" (successor to the Navigator) web browser.** "Market share" is everything in the electronics business and Microsoft began playing catchup two years ago by offering its Internet Explorer browser free and including it without additional cost in its Windows 95 operating system.

Now Netscape is pondering giving the software away to (you guessed it!) reclaim lost market share. Netscape "officially" will charge \$59 or \$79 for its new "Communicator" but apparently few will pay it.

Both the new Internet Explorer 4.0 and Netscape Communicator will feature "push" channels and multimedia netcasting.

Netscape which was once the highest flying new issue is now trading near its low and CEO James Clark has seen his \$1.2 billion in stock slip to \$422 million!

■ **Machine gun dialing! Tired of getting a busy signal when you dial AOL?** PowerDialer repeatedly dials busy telephone numbers as fast as once every 2½ seconds ...the minimum amount of time to recognize a busy signal or speech. An alarm sounds to alert you when you have successfully connected! PowerDialer is also helpful in getting through to busy tech support, ticket ordering and radio contest lines. PowerDialer works with any

modem or phone line. (\$249 from Technology Arts. Toll free: 1-800-600-1778.)

■ **Internet to hasten the demise of the traveling salesman.** Intuit, Inc., the parent of the best selling Quicken personal finance software is expanding into additional web-based financial services. They will offer discounted car and home insurance, investments, home mortgages and retirement plans. And Intuit will get a cut out of every financial product sold. Check out URL -- <http://www.insuremarket.com>

■ **Now that flat rate pricing is in effect (at least for now), American Online's revenue increase will come from advertising!** A new search product (called "AOL NetFind") will be aggressively offered to advertisers. And AOL's 8 million subscribers will be hearing a lot about "TelSave" which paid big bucks for the exclusive right to market its discount phone service to its captive audience.

■ **If you can't fight-em, join'em department.** Advertising on the Web is expected to reach \$500 million to \$1 billion this year, and \$5 billion in the year 2000.

Threatened by a decreasing market, newspapers and television stations are getting on the bandwagon. Next month, a consortium that represents more than half of all U.S. newspaper circulation is rolling out a national network of local newspaper websites. They eventually want all of the nations 1,532 daily newspapers represented which will share content. And Warner Bros. wowed the LA Internet World trade show audience with its planned "CityWeb" which launches this summer. CityWeb will be a global news/information service with local content provided by your neighborhood TV station. Advertising will be sold nationally ...and locally.

■ **The addition of many new telephone area codes is raising havoc with FAX machines and Internet access.** Pre-programmed speed dial telephone numbers and Internet access numbers no longer work. Area code changes requires users to change the dial-up number and PCS are going dark once the grace period ends. There are various systems for determining which areas get a new prefix. Sometimes it is based on geography ...in other areas, only newly assigned phone numbers are getting a new area code. Some locations even have two area codes! Online services which offer hundreds of local access lines are having a particularly difficult time. Manhattan (New York City)

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will soon be divided between the current 212 and the new 646.

WASHINGTON WHISPERS

■ Internet-in-the-Sky via a small dish antenna could make telephone access obsolete within five years! The FCC has just granted a license to Teledesic Corp. to build, launch and operate a system of 840 satellites. Teledesic is financed by Microsoft CEO, Bill Gates and telecommunications magnate, Craig McCaw.

Gates is the world's richest man at \$23.9 billion. And McCaw is founder of McCaw Cellular Communications which he sold to AT&T in 1994 for \$11.5 billion. Together, they will primarily foot the \$9 billion price tag to launch a constellation of low-Earth orbiting (LEO) satellites ...something that no government could afford!

Microsoft wants to offer high-speed low-cost Internet access ...especially to under-developed countries -- and McCaw: global telephone service. Besides humanitarian reasons, they also want to make money! The cost and accessibility constraints of remote areas -- such as in Asia and Africa -- makes hard wiring totally impossible.

To make room for the new "Ka" band service, the Department of Defense agreed to move its 18 GHz Digital Electronic Message Service (DEMS) to 24 GHz.

Internet access from a geostationary satellite is not feasible due to the half second delay in getting a signal up and back from a transponder located 22,300 miles over the equator. Teledesic satellites will orbit at a low 435 mile altitude with no time delay. The satellites, which cost \$5.2 million each, will be launched beginning in the year 2000. The service should be ready two years later.

■ Microsoft has proposed a new Internet broadcast standard. The technology would let news companies send targeted news and information to specific computer users. Called "Channel Definition Format™" (CDF,) it will be included in Microsoft's next browser release: the Internet Explorer version 4.0.

Here is what Microsoft says about CDF: "The Channel Definition Format is an open specification that permits a web publisher to offer frequently updated collections of information, or channels, from any web server for automatic delivery to compatible receiver programs on PCS or

other information appliances." Thus, websites will be able to automatically send wanted information to computer users. America Online intends to use the new technology in its "AOL Driveway" which gathers requested information during off peak hours and delivers it to subscriber desk tops.

The downside is that CDF brings the Internet closer to "broadcasting" rather than a "print" model. A lower federal court overturned the decency act on the basis that it felt the new Internet medium was closer to the printed word which is not subject to FCC scrutiny. (See related story on page 9.)

■ According to FCC Chairman, Reed Hundt, broadcasters are slow to accept the conversion to high-definition TV. The Commission is expected to pass out new spectrum in April so that the nation's top 10 markets can begin higher quality digital TV broadcasting. The FCC wants HDTV broadcasts to start in 1998, but telecasters want more time -- up to six years -- to purchase and install the equipment.

TV receiver manufacturers say they won't bring new digital TV sets to market unless the service is available. So that existing TV sets won't be rendered immediately obsolete, a transition time is being established whereby TV stations will transmit in both analog and digital format.

The first digital TV receivers will also be "all format," ...that is they will be able to decode both 525-line analog and 1080-line digital broadcasts. Once digital TV broadcasting takes hold, broadcasters will return their current VHF/UHF analog spectrum so that it may be auctioned.

The National Association of Broadcasters plans a live demonstration of HDTV at their annual trade show and conference to be held at the Las Vegas Convention Center from April 6-10. About 100,000 people from broadcasting and teleproduction are expected to attend. As always, there will also be a ham operator reception at the NAB. This year's reception is scheduled for April 9th.

■ Two lawmakers, Sen. Ron Wyden (Dem-OR) and Chris Cox (Rep.-CA), have introduced a bill into Congress that would prevent local and state governments from imposing new taxes on business conducted over the Internet.

■ The FCC has set April 1" as the day when it plans to auction off spectrum for DARS (Digital Audio Radio Service.) Satellite delivered radio to automo-

biles threatens thousands of local AM/FM radio stations. And shortly thereafter, the FCC will begin selling off LMDS (local multipoint distribution service) spectrum. The wireless service can be used to transmit local phone service, television, video conferencing and high speed data to small receiver dishes.

AMATEUR RADIO

■ AMSAT reports that major progress is being made towards readying its Phase 3D Amateur satellite for a July launch. The completed satellite, is now under final testing at Orlando International Airport. In early March, a combined German/American engineering team installed the satellite's main power system. After checkout, all transmitters were then fired up and the receivers tested. All performed well without a problem. And the image quality of on-board JAMSAT scope camera was "...absolutely superb" according to AMSAT-NA Vice President, Keith Baker, KB1SF. He said that much work still needs to be done but everything is progressing on schedule.

■ Do you remember the story we did a couple of issues ago about the two ham operators (Chris KD6KWC and Greg KD6KWB Hassett) who in 1992 came up with the idea of "pointcasting" ("pushing") specified Internet news and information to your PC desktop which could be read off line?

Well, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., wants to buy *The PointCast Network* for \$400 million! News Corp., owns Fox News, TV Guide, the New York Post, 20th Century Fox and the soon-to-launch "A-Sky-B" (American Sky Broadcasting) satellite home service. Microsoft is also supposedly interested. And another rumor had PointCast going public later on this year in much the same manner as Netscape. In any event, it appears that the Hassett's have hit it big time!

Separately, cable TV interests are trying to block Murdoch's entry into the home satellite-dish business. A-Sky-B will offer 500 channels -- including local channels, the first to do so.

■ It looks like the FCC will not be informally authorizing any more of 1-by-1 special event call signs. The new thinking is that amateurs should wait for the Commission to rule on FCC Docket WT 95-57 which could take a while!

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It has already been nearly two years since the Commission issued a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* which addressed five issues. On April 25, 1995, the FCC proposed to:

- 1.) **Recognize the role of the "VE Session Manager"** as the person who plans, keeps records, organizes and supervises the activities at each session. (In response to a petition, RM-8301, from the National Conference of VECs.)
- 2.) **Authorize the administering VEs to give examination credit** for any examination that the applicant previously passed in obtaining the former license regardless of when the examination was passed. (ARRL petition, RM 8418, requesting that former license holders be permitted to re-enter the Amateur Service without examination.)

3.) **Require that a minimum of four members**, rather than two, be the minimum necessary to constitute a bona fide radio club. (ARRL petition, RM-8462)

4.) **A Special Event Call Sign System** utilizing a single prefix letter (K, N or W), a numeral (1 to 0) and a single suffix letter, A to Z -- except the letter X which is reserved for experimental stations. (One-by-one special event call signs were requested by the ARRL in their comments on the Vanity Call Sign System.)

5.) **Permit self-assigned call sign indicators** which may be included before, after or both before and after the FCC-issued amateur station call sign.

■ The SAREX/ARISS Working Group is scheduling more school ham radio contacts with ham-astronaut Jerry Linenger, KC5HBT aboard the Russian Mir Space Station. On March 4, students at Perryton High School, Perryton, TX got to chat with Linenger during a 10-minute pass. Reporters from two TV stations and a newspaper were also on hand. Another 18 schools are scheduled over the next six weeks!

■ Due to a privacy complaint, the FCC is no longer including an amateur's date of birth in its Internet posted amateur service database. But existing databases already in use on the Web -- such as those posted by QRZ and the University of Arkansas -- will still have them since they merely update the existing records which already include them.

■ **Hong Kong will not be changing its country prefix when it reverts to Chinese rule this summer.** The VRA-VRZ block allocated by the ITU to the

United Kingdom will be transferred to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997. Hong Kong amateurs are being allowed to use the numeral 97 (in 1997) and 98 (in 1998) to commemorate the transfer of the territory from the UK to the PRC. What is unknown, however, is what the prefix will be for Pitcairn Island where VR6 calls are still in use.

■ **Alinco USA, Torrance, CA has reduced dealer prices a second time in less than a year!** The new price structure is effective March 11, 1997. Alinco USA's branch manager, Taka Nakayama, says he is passing on the more favorable Dollar-Yen exchange rate to dealers. "Street prices" should be lower.

■ **9th Degree Black Belt in CW!** The Japan Amateur Radio League has established a new Morse Code receiving skill award which follows the Japanese traditional way of ranking "Judo" and "Karate." There are two areas of authorization; Japanese and European characters ...and European characters only.

The JARL rankings are unrelated to the national exams for amateur radio operators which requires 5 words-per-minute (Third Class), 9 wpm (Second Class) and both 12 wpm European/10 wpm Japanese language (First Class.)

The first JARL CW tests were held on March 16, 1997. There are nine degrees of CW proficiency:

JARL CW SKILL RECOGNITION EXAM

Class:	Speed/Min	Exam Length
Master	36 wpm	5 minutes
5 Dan	32 wpm	5 minutes
4 Dan	28 wpm	5 minutes
3 Dan	24 wpm	5 minutes
2 Dan	22 wpm	5 minutes
Shodan	18 wpm	3 minutes
1 Kyu	12 wpm	3 minutes
2 Kyu	9 wpm	2 minutes
3 Kyu*	5 wpm	2 minutes

= Based on 5 characters/minute

■ **The International Telecommunication Union has set May 17th as World Telecommunication Day** commemorating its founding in Paris 132 years ago. (187 countries are now ITU members.) This year's theme, "Telecommunications and Humanitarian Affairs," will focus on the growing link between telecommunications and emergency relief operations. A WWW site will be set up at <http://www.itu.int/wtd> The initial ITU press release does not mention ham radio!

Instead it says:

"Where there is widespread loss to the local telephone service, new kinds of systems currently under development have the potential to be of great help. Telecommunications systems based around constellations of Low and Medium-Earth-Orbiting satellites, due for launch over the next five years, bring with them the promise of global mobile telephony, regardless of the whereabouts of the user, or even the existence of on-the-ground telecommunications."

■ **Unbelievably, after nearly ten years, the FCC has finally completed work on the reallocation of the 220-222 MHZ band from the Amateur Service to business interests!**

On March 13, the FCC released final rules for the operation, licensing and auctioning of narrow band channels in what is left of the 220-222 MHZ ham band. Successful bidders may use the spectrum to provide both voice and data services either on a commercial or internal basis. Both nationwide and regional licenses are available. The Commission stated that "these rules will enable the FCC to continue to promote the development of advanced radio technologies, while making the widest variety of mobile communications services available to the American public."

The 220-222 MHZ ham band was reallocated in 1988 to private and federal government land mobile use and specifically dedicated to the development of spectrally efficient narrowband technology. The 2 MHZ was channelized into two hundred 5 kHz channel pairs.

Narrowband technology, however, never gained acceptance in the marketplace. There were a number of delays caused by the late (1991) adoption of service rules and a lawsuit challenging certain aspects of the FCC's licensing procedures. Bidders will be able to obtain larger bandwidths by purchasing adjacent channels.

■ **Callbook: 1920-1997 RIP -- One of the oldest institutions in Amateur Radio is no more!** The 1997 print edition of the *Radio Amateur Callbook* will be the last. Effective with the 1998 edition, the *Radio Amateur Callbook* will be issued only in the CD-ROM version.

The *Radio Amateur Callbook* has been continuously printed since 1920. Its demise was caused by rising costs and the widespread availability of digital databases on the Internet. We understand that there are a few 1997 "collectors" editions still available. (Tel. 908/905-2961)

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SUPREME COURT TO CONSIDER DECENCY ACT

Government Pitted Against First Amendment Watchdogs

By the time you read this, The U.S. Supreme Court will have begun consideration of the Communications Decency Act of 1996. Enacted on February 8, 1996 as part of the massive telecom overhaul, the CDA makes it a felony to initiate any obscene or indecent transmission (defined as a "...comment, request, suggestion, proposal, image or other communication") by a telecommunications device or interactive computer to minors under 18 years of age. The penalty is stiff -- up to a \$250,000 fine and two years in prison!

According to the CDA, an obscene or indecent telecommunications transmission is illegal if the recipient is "known" to be under 18 years of age, while an interactive computer display is illegal if it is merely "available" to a person under 18.

The amateur radio rules (Sec. §97.113a4) bans all obscene and indecent transmissions regardless of the age of the recipient. The ham radio rules also used to prohibit profane language but this was dropped on July 15, 1993 as being a First Amendment problem when the FCC rewrote the prohibited transmissions section.

The definitions of obscene, indecent and profane are somewhat illusive. Material is generally considered obscene if it is patently offensive and depicts sexual or excretory functions ...especially that involving children and lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value. Indecent material is offensive material which may have educational, artistic or scientific value. Profanity is defined as an irreverence toward God and sacred principles. The CDA, however, sort of indicates that obscene and indecent material is basically the same thing. To make matters even more complicated, the freedom to read anything can be read into the First Amendment. But the freedoms of speech and the press are not absolute. Thus "book" and "broadcast" freedoms are different.

By law, the FCC has authority to regulate obscene and indecent broadcast programming even though indecent material is constitutionally protected. The Commission curtails indecent programming when children are likely to be in the audience.

There are no restrictions on private "telephoned" content ...and no regulations applying to the written word. Thus it is perfectly legal to print filthy words or say them privately ...but not to broadcast them publicly. Since the Internet is a public resource, the question becomes are Internet Web sites considered publishing or broadcasting.

As soon as it was signed into law by Pres. Clinton, the CDA was challenged in the federal courts by several human rights, online, journalist and library organizations. Clinton's initial statement defended the Act: "I remain convinced ...that our Constitution allows us to help parents by enforcing this Act to prevent children from being exposed to objectionable material transmitted through computer networks."

Actually, the three federal judge panel did not know

much about the Internet. So the courtroom was wired with high speed lines and they were given a crash course on how the Internet works and what is available there. Nearly 200 pages were then written defining the Net. Here are some of the things that the federal judges learned:

1. The Internet is not a tangible entity, but rather a giant network of computers linked to each other for the purpose of exchanging files and messages.
2. It is impossible to know its size at a given moment. Tens of millions of people around the world are linked to the Internet. Sixty percent are in the U.S. That figure is expected to grow to 200 million by 1999.
3. Messages between computers on the Internet do not necessarily travel along the same path. The Internet uses "packet switching" and individual packets of a given message are sent independently to the destination and are automatically reassembled by the receiving computer.
4. No single entity -- academic, corporate, governmental or non-profit -- administers the Internet. It exists and functions due to the adoption of common data protocols to exchange information between computers. There is no centralized control point and it is not technically feasible for a single entity to control all of the information conveyed.
5. There are two common methods to establish an actual link to the Internet. First, one can use a computer connected to an online network connected to the Internet. Second, one can use a personal computer to connect over a telephone line to a larger computer that is connected to the Internet. Individuals can also access the Internet through local libraries, typically at no cost to the individual user.
6. Once connected, there are a wide variety of different information exchanged over the Internet.
 - (a) one-to-one messaging (such as "e-mail"),
 - (b) one-to-many messaging (such as "listserv"),
 - (c) distributed message databases (such as "USENET newsgroups"),
 - (d) real time communications (such as "Internet Relay Chat"),
 - (e) real time remote computer utilization (such as "telnet"), and
 - (f) remote information retrieval (such as "ftp," "gopher," and the "World Wide Web").
7. The World Wide Web was created to serve as the platform for a global, online store of knowledge, containing information from a diversity of sources and accessible to Internet users around the world. Though information on the Web is contained in individual computers, since each of these computers is connected to the Internet allows all of the information to become part of a single body of knowledge.
8. The World Wide Web is a series of documents stored in different computers all of the Internet. An essential element of the Web is that any document has an address (rather like a telephone number). Most Web documents contain links which refer users to other documents. When selected by

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the user, the referenced document is automatically displayed, where ever in the world it is actually stored.

9. The World Wide Web exists fundamentally as a platform through which people and organizations can communicate through shared information. When information is made available, it is said to be "published" on the Web. Many Web publishers choose to lease disk storage space from someone else who has the necessary computer facilities, eliminating the need for actually owning any equipment.
10. The Web, as a universe of network accessible information, contains a variety of documents prepared with quite varying degrees of care, from the hastily typed idea, to the professionally executed corporate profile. Web publishing is simple enough that thousands of individual users and small community organizations are using the Web to publish their own personal "home pages," the equivalent of individualized newsletters about that person or organization, which are available to anyone on the Web.
11. A variety of systems have developed that allow users of the Web to search particular information among all of the public sites that are part of the Web. These services are known as "search engines."
12. The Web links together disparate information on an ever-growing number of Internet-linked computers by setting common information storage formats (HTML) and a common language for the exchange of Web documents (HTTP). Although the information itself may be in many different formats, and stored on computers which are not otherwise compatible, the basic Web standards provide a basic set of standards which allow communication and exchange of information.
13. The Web was designed so that organizations with computers containing information can become part of the Web simply by attaching their computers to the Internet. No single organization controls any membership in the Web, nor is there any single centralized point from which individual Web sites or services can be blocked from the Web.
14. With the rapid growth of the Internet, and the existence of material online that some parents may consider inappropriate for their children, various systems enable parents to control the material which comes into their homes and may be accessible to their children.
15. MIT's World Wide Web Consortium launched the PICs (Platform for Internet Content Selection) program in order to develop technical standards that would support parents' ability to filter and screen material that their children see on the Web. Until a majority of sites on the Internet have been rated by a PICs rating service, PICs will initially function as a "positive" ratings system in which only those sites that have been rated will be displayed using PICs compatible software. PICs will initially function as a site inclusion list rather than a site exclusion list.
16. There are also a number of software products that are intended to enable parents and other adults to limit the Internet access of children. Some block site categories, others specific sites or sites containing certain words.
17. Communications over the Internet do not "invade" an individual's home or appear on one's computer screen uninvited. Users seldom encounter content "by accident." There is no effective way to determine the identity or the age of a user

who is accessing material on the Internet.

18. A large percentage, perhaps 40% or more, of content on the Internet originates outside the United States. Foreign content is frequently indistinguishable from domestic content.
19. The use of "caching" (temporary storage) makes it difficult to determine whether the material originated from foreign or domestic sources. Caching advances cheap and speedy retrieval of information.
20. Anonymity is often important to Internet users who seek to access sensitive information.

As a result of their inquiry, on March 21, 1996, the three Philadelphia federal judges granted Internet users the highest level of protection against government censorship. It was proof once again that the 200 year old First Amendment could adapt to new media. The Internet was viewed as being the closest to books, magazines and newspapers, which have always enjoyed the greatest freedom from government restraint. Existing laws which prohibit obscenity and child pornography were not affected.

In banning enforcement of the Communications Decency Act, the judges said, "The Internet is a far more speech-enhancing medium than print. Because it would necessarily affect the Internet itself, the CDA would necessarily reduce the speech available for adults on the medium. This is a constitutionally intolerable result. ...As the most participatory form of mass speech yet developed, the Internet deserves the highest protection from government intrusion." In short, they viewed the Internet as the modern day equivalent of the printing press and gave it as much protection.

The Justice Department appealed the lower court ruling in June 1996 stating they believed the statute can be applied in a constitutional manner to assist parents in protecting children from sexually explicit materials on the Internet.

The Supreme Court decision is expected in June 1997. There is growing concern that the high court may not fully understand the Internet. Unlike the lower court, they won't be given a demonstration. The Supreme Court still does not have a Web site or even e-mail addresses! But even if the nine justices agree with the lower court's finding, it appears certain that some watered-down version of the CDA will once again be introduced into Congress.

There is now reason to believe that the Clinton administration may be changing its mind on the CDA. The senior advisor to the president has publicly said he will advise the president to veto any CDA-like legislation. Ira Magaziner said he personally believes that Communications Decency Act "...is not a good act. There should be no censorship on the Internet. Instead we should empower citizens to screen out material they deem harmful or unwanted. History is against autocratic governments that fear the Internet and try to restrict the flow of information to their citizens."